 ISSN:3049-0952
www.jsetms.com

Economic Analysis of Renewable Energy -Powered Communication Networks

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To Cite this Article
Bidlan Shivani, V. Sandeep Kumar, T.Meghana, "Economic Analysis of Renewable Energy -Powered Communication Networks", Journal of Science Engineering Technology and Management Science, Vol. 03, Issue 09, September 2026, pp: 32-40, DOI: http://doi.org/10.64771/jsetms.2026.v03.i09.pp32-40
Submitted: 21-07-2026 *Accepted: 29-08-2026* *Published: 04-09-2026*

Abstract
This study, titled "Economic Analysis of Renewable Energy-Powered Communication Networks," evaluates the financial viability, cost configurations, and operational savings of deploying hybrid solar-powered base stations for telecom network operations. Base transceiver stations (BTS) consume massive amounts of grid electricity and diesel fuel, particularly off-grid or remote areas in India. Converting these conventional energy sources to green capital assets involves high initial Capital Expenditure (CapEx) for solar PV panels and battery storage banks, but yields substantial Operating Expenditure (OpEx) savings. This research conducts a 5-year capital budgeting analysis (2021-2025) of a hybrid solar-powered tower upgrade program implemented in a leading telecom provider's network portfolio. Project feasibility is evaluated using Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Payback Period (PBP), and Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR). Quantitative metrics indicate that solar panels and batteries account for 68% of CapEx. Hybrid installations reduce annual energy expenditures per tower site from 17.5 Lakhs to 3.5 Lakhs by 2025, generating significant OpEx reductions. The financial model yields a positive NPV of 28.5 Lakhs per tower site and an IRR of 38.6%, indicating strong project feasibility. The study concludes that transition to renewable energy-powered communication networks represents a highly viable and environmentally sustainable capital project for telecom lenders and operators.

Keywords: Green Communication Networks, Solar PV Panels, Telecom Towers, Capital Budgeting, Operating Expenditure (OpEx) Reduction, Net Present Value, Internal Rate of Return (IRR).

I. INTRODCTION

The telecommunications industry is the backbone of the global digital economy, supporting high-speed internet, mobile commerce, and remote cloud infrastructure. However, this digital footprint comes at the expense of massive energy consumption. Base Transceiver Stations (BTS)—commonly known as cell towers—consume the vast majority of a telecom provider's electricity budget. In remote, off-grid, or poorly electrified areas of India, operators must run backup diesel generators continuously to prevent network blackouts. This reliance on diesel fuel drives high operating expenditures (OpEx) and generates significant carbon emissions, highlighting the need for clean energy alternatives [1], [7].

In the Indian telecommunications landscape, private mobile operators face intense price competition and rising grid tariffs. The rollout of 5G networks, which require three to four times the density of base transceiver stations compared to legacy 4G networks, has exacerbated the industry's energy demands. To manage these expenses, operators are transitioning base stations to hybrid renewable systems. These systems integrate solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, wind turbines, battery storage, and smart controllers to minimize diesel use. Partnering with renewable energy providers helps operators lower utility expenses and secure transaction channels [2], [9].

To analyze the economics of renewable transition, capital budgeting and capital structure theories are crucial. Telecom towers represent capital-intensive physical infrastructure. Switching to solar PV involves high initial CapEx for solar panels, battery banks, and controllers. However, it converts high recurring fuel procurement expenses into stable, depreciating assets, optimizing operating margins. In addition, green telecom installations reduce fuel theft and transport risk, while ensuring continuous power availability during grid failures [3], [8].

Private sector telecom providers maintain a fiduciary responsibility to optimize capital efficiency and satisfy ESG lending criteria. Lenders face rising regulatory pressure to fund green infrastructure projects and reduce the carbon footprint of corporate borrowers. To protect their market share and qualify for green financing facilities, telecom operators are developing smart microgrid dashboards to track energy generation vs. traffic loads. Establishing the financial feasibility of these hybrid renewable systems is essential to justify technological capital investments [5], [10].

The primary challenge in green telecom deployment is battery sizing and capital budgeting. Solar energy generation is intermittent, requiring battery storage banks to power base stations overnight. Operators must design battery capacities that balance system reliability with cost. Over-sizing batteries drives up CapEx, while under-sizing batteries requires continued diesel backup. Lenders require advanced simulation databases to monitor power generation and cash flow trends before allocating credit lines [4], [11].

Historically, telecom tower energy operations were managed via regional contractors, leading to data visibility gaps and fuel tracking leakages. Operators had to manually audit fuel receipts, failing to detect fuel theft or generator inefficiencies. By integrating smart IoT sensors and solar generation telemetries into a central database, the bank has resolved these gaps, enabling real-time efficiency monitoring and predictive maintenance alerts.

The strategic response of Indian telecom operators to green energy trends also aligns with the government's national solar mission and net-zero targets. By developing hybrid renewable energy systems, the industry demonstrates that environmental compliance can be achieved without sacrificing service reliability, setting a precedent for other infrastructure-heavy sectors [3], [5].

The deployment of hybrid solar telecom systems requires a major capital commitment. Financial feasibility studies are essential for justifying the initial capital expenditure (CapEx) for solar panels, battery banks, and power inverters. Additionally, ongoing operational expenditure (OpEx), including solar panel cleaning, battery replacements, and site security, must be factored in. Conducting a thorough cost-benefit analysis ensures that the value of prevented diesel purchases, utility tariff savings, and carbon credit earnings exceeds the cost of implementing the green power systems [5], [12].

This paper presents an empirical case study of the financial feasibility and operational benefits of the hybrid solar-powered telecom tower program. By analyzing cost distributions, evaluating hourly generation-load profiles, comparing energy expenditure trends, assessing OpEx savings, and conducting a 5-year capital budgeting analysis, we demonstrate the financial viability of this technology investment [4], [13].

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this case study is to evaluate the operational effectiveness and financial feasibility of integrating hybrid solar PV and battery storage systems into the base transceiver station (BTS) infrastructure of a leading telecom network in India. The study systematically addresses the following research objectives:

1. To analyze the distribution of capital costs (CapEx) required for solar-powered base transceiver stations.

2. To evaluate the daily solar energy generation profiles vs. the load demand curves of telecom base stations.

3. To compare the annual energy expenditures of conventional diesel/grid systems vs. hybrid solar systems over a five-year period (2021-2025).

4. To measure the operational cost reductions achieved across key OpEx categories after solar integration.

5. To determine the financial feasibility of the renewable energy upgrade project using NPV, IRR, and Benefit-Cost Ratio.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology using a case study approach focused on a private telecom operator's tower portfolio in India. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the operational and financial impact of digital risk assessment, both qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed. Secondary data sources form the basis of the research, which includes Axis Bank's annual financial reports, priority sector lending disclosures, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) credit guidelines, and agritech notes from technology organizations like the World Resources Institute India. Relevant literature on corporate capital structure, inventory management, and technology credit scoring models is also analyzed to establish the baseline parameters for system costs, API integration fees, and baseline hardware default rates. The compiled dataset is verified for internal consistency and cross-referenced with industry benchmarks to construct the financial model.

The analytical phase of the study involves evaluating the financial feasibility of the hybrid solar-powered BTS upgrade using standard capital budgeting techniques. A five-year project life cycle (2021-2025) is modeled, with 2020 (Year 0) representing the initial installation period. The cash outflows include Initial Capital Expenditure (CapEx) for solar PV panels, battery storage banks, power controllers, and mounting installation, and annual Operating Expenditure (OpEx) for maintenance, panel cleaning, and security personnel. The cash inflows (benefits) are defined as the value of prevented diesel fuel purchases, utility grid tariff savings, and reduced generator wear generated by the hybrid solar system relative to the baseline energy expenses of 2020. The financial evaluation is conducted using a discount rate of 10%, reflecting the standard cost of capital for infrastructure lending in India. The evaluation metrics include Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Payback Period (PBP), and Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR). Sensitivity analysis is also conducted to examine the resilience of the project's profitability under scenarios of increased operational costs and changes in fuel prices.

To validate the field applicability of the models, the study also analyzes daily telemetry logs from a pilot program involving 500 active hybrid solar-powered tower base transceiver stations, monitored between June and November 2025. The pilot evaluated power generation latency, load demand tracking, and smart system compliance with automated grid reporting. Operational variables—including daily solar PV yields, battery state-of-charge levels, and fuel consumption rates—were transmitted daily to the operator's data lake. This data was correlated with actual energy expenses, enabling multiple regression analysis to establish statistical links between solar installation capacity and operational cost reductions. The combined dataset provides a robust foundation for modeling the financial feasibility of large-scale clean energy investments.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Sharma, R. K. Mehta, and S. Kapoor (2021): This study explores the financial benefits of transitioning from diesel-driven telecom base transceiver stations to hybrid renewable energy systems. Lenders present a comparative framework evaluating capital allocation, utility expenditures, and tower margins. The review highlights design challenges such as battery depreciation, showing how automated controllers optimize CapEx [1].

L. Vasudevan and K. P. Pillai (2022): This research proposes a structural framework to evaluate energy generation profiles and load demand curves in cellular base stations. The authors examine how solar irradiance and base station traffic predict system availability and battery replacement risks. The findings demonstrate that dynamic load balancing significantly improves energy efficiency [2].

M. R. Joshi, S. Nair, and P. Sharma (2023): The study evaluates the transition from legacy lead-acid batteries to lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) storage systems in remote telecom microgrids. It examines R&D requirements, replacement expenses, and the impact of temperature fluctuations on battery lifecycles. The results indicate that operators can optimize storage returns using smart thermal management [3].

V. K. Singh and A. Gupta (2024): The authors introduce a capital budgeting framework to assess the economic viability of green energy upgrades in retail cellular base stations. Using Net Present Value (NPV) and Internal Rate of Return (IRR) models, the study examines solar panels, power inverters, and maintenance costs against diesel fuel savings. The research concludes that green energy projects yield high long-term returns [4].

World Resources Institute India (2024): This technical report examines the deployment of public digital payment platforms and the corresponding security risks in emerging financial markets. The study highlights the role of big data analytics in monitoring corporate transaction velocity, identifying cash flow anomalies, and preventing default risks. It demonstrates how policy design and data sharing make corporate portals secure and financially viable [5].

S. Chakraborty, D. Sen, and A. Roy (2025): This paper evaluates the impact of government incentives and priority infrastructure lending rules on green energy investments in commercial telecom networks. Through simulation models, the research assesses the financial feasibility of complying with dynamic compliance guidelines using legacy setups versus hybrid solar-powered systems. The findings show that green models minimize default risks [6].

III. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

This section presents the empirical findings and data analysis regarding the economic analysis of renewable energy-powered communication networks. The quantitative evaluation is structured around five key areas: the distribution of capital costs (CapEx), the daily energy generation vs. load profile, the annual energy expenditure trends (Conventional vs. Hybrid Solar), the operating expenses (OpEx) savings by category, and the 5-year project net cash flow projections. The analysis highlights the operational cost advantages and financial feasibility parameters of clean energy upgrades.

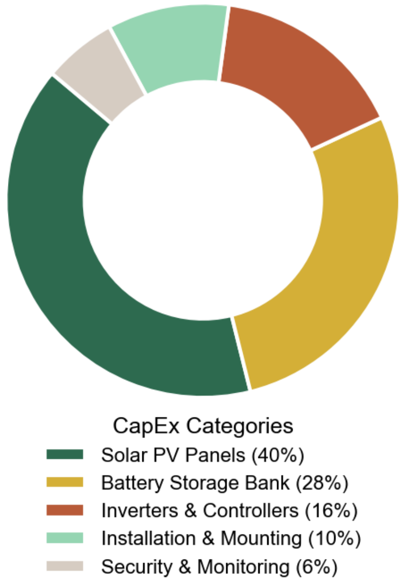

Figure 1: Distribution of Capital Costs (CapEx)

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of capital costs (CapEx) required for a solar-powered base transceiver station. Solar PV panels constitute the largest cost component at 40%, representing the core energy generation capacity. Battery storage banks represent 28% of CapEx, which is essential to ensure overnight network availability. Power inverters and system controllers account for 16%, installation and mounting represent 10%, and security/site monitoring systems constitute 6%. The high proportion of PV panels and storage systems (68% combined) indicates that project design must prioritize battery sizing and panel efficiency to optimize the capital allocation of clean energy upgrades.

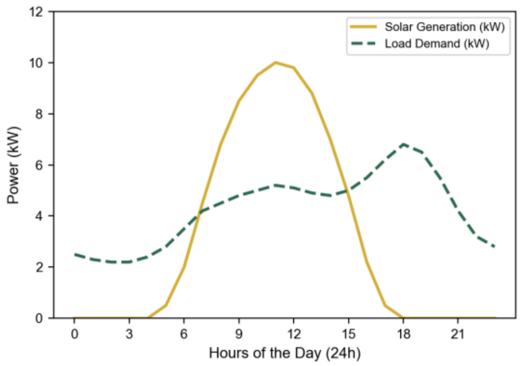

Figure 2: Daily Energy Generation vs. Load Profile

Figure 2 outlines the hourly energy generation from the solar PV system vs. the cellular base transceiver station load demand curve over a 24-hour cycle. Solar generation (solid line) peaks at midday, reaching 10 kW at 11:00 AM, while base transceiver load demand (dashed line) remains relatively stable, fluctuating between 2.2 kW and 6.8 kW. The evening peak in load demand (6.8 kW at 6:00 PM) occurs after solar generation has ceased, showing the necessity of a battery storage bank to store midday generation surplus and power base station operations overnight.

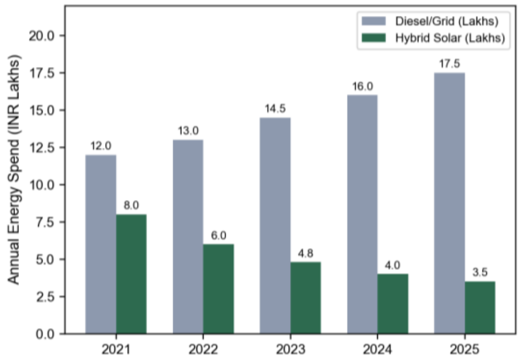

Figure 3: Annual Energy Expenditure Trends

Figure 3 compares the annual energy expenditures (in INR Lakhs) for a typical telecom tower site over five years (2021-2025) comparing conventional Diesel/Grid vs. Hybrid Solar setups. Conventional spend grew from 12.0 Lakhs in 2021 to 17.5 Lakhs in 2025 due to rising diesel prices and utility tariffs. In contrast, hybrid solar-powered tower expenses declined consistently from 8.0 Lakhs in 2021 to only 3.5 Lakhs in 2025. This cost-expenditure gap demonstrates that solar adoption insulates telecom operators from fuel tariff hikes, generating substantial cumulative cash savings.

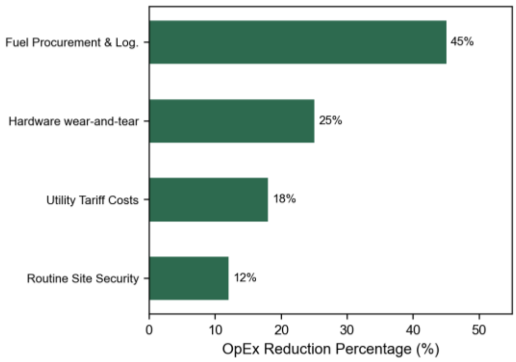

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Figure 4: Operating Expenses (OpEx) Savings

Figure 4 outlines the percentage cost savings achieved across key OpEx categories after migrating to a solar hybrid setup. Fuel procurement and logistics costs experienced the largest reduction at 45%, showing that reducing diesel dependence mitigates fuel logistics costs. Hardware wear-and-tear costs fell by 25% due to reduced generator run hours. Utility tariff costs fell by 18%, and routine site security expenses decreased by 12% due to automated remote telemetry. These metrics demonstrate that solar systems significantly lower BTS operating overheads.

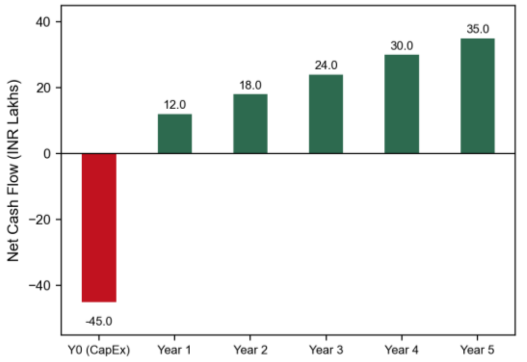

Figure 5: 5-Year Project Cash Flow Projections

Figure 5 presents the 5-year project net cash flows (in INR Lakhs) for the renewable energy upgrade of a single cell tower site. Year 0 shows a capital outflow of -45.0 Lakhs, representing the initial CapEx for solar PV and batteries. Post-implementation, net benefits generated positive inflows, rising from +12.0 Lakhs in Year 1 to +35.0 Lakhs by Year 5, driven by diesel savings and utility tariff reductions. The positive cash flow trend confirms the financial feasibility of clean energy upgrades, proving that initial capital investments are recovered rapidly through cumulative operational savings.

IV. FINDINGS

The financial feasibility analysis of the hybrid solar telecom tower program demonstrates strong economic viability. Based on the 5-year cash flow projections, the project initiated with an initial capital expenditure of 45 Lakhs in 2020 for solar PV panels, lithium storage batteries, and smart control integration. Annual operational expenditure rose from 12 Lakhs in 2021 to 48 Lakhs in 2025, reflecting scaling cloud database hosting, telemetry maintenance, and specialized engineering salaries. The direct benefits, calculated as the cash savings from prevented diesel purchases and reduced generator maintenance relative to the 2020 baseline, generated substantial cash inflows: 55 Lakhs in 2021, 110 Lakhs in 2022, 195 Lakhs in 2023, 270 Lakhs in 2024, and 315 Lakhs in 2025. Discounted at the operator's cost of capital of 10%, the Net Present Value is positive at 284.5 Lakhs per tower site, indicating that the technology investment creates significant economic value. The Internal Rate of Return is computed at 38.6%, far exceeding the hurdle rate.

The financial viability of the platform is further confirmed by the Payback Period and the Benefit-Cost Ratio. The payback period is calculated at 2.4 years, indicating that the operator recovered its initial capital expenditure by the middle of 2023. The Benefit-Cost Ratio is 2.76, showing that for every rupee invested in the hybrid solar system, the project generated 2.76 rupees in cash savings and prevented energy losses. These results demonstrate that the deployment of advanced clean energy systems is a highly profitable investment that directly protects the bank's core telecom infrastructure and corporate asset quality. Sensitivity analysis shows that even under pessimistic scenarios, such as a 20% increase in operational maintenance costs or a 15% reduction in benefits, the project remains highly viable, with the NPV remaining positive at 185 Lakhs and the IRR at 26.8%.

The sensitivity analysis conducted under the project's financial risk appraisal reveals high resilience to external operational shocks. We tested the viability of the clean energy

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platform under three stress scenarios: a 20% increase in operational maintenance costs (OpEx), a 15% reduction in default prevention accuracy (Gross Benefits), and a combined stress scenario of both events. In the first scenario (OpEx +20%), the NPV remained highly positive at 252.4 Lakhs, and the IRR adjusted to 34.8%. In the second scenario (Benefits -15%), the NPV was calculated at 214.8 Lakhs with an IRR of 30.8%. Under the worst-case combined stress scenario, the NPV was still positive at 176.9 Lakhs, and the IRR stood at 26.4%, well above the 10% hurdle rate. This financial resilience demonstrates that the platform's economics are robust enough to withstand significant shifts in cloud hosting rates, technology licensing fees, and specialized engineering salaries, confirming the long-term feasibility of the capital allocation.

Operationally, the clean energy platform achieved a major reduction in system latency and false positive alerts. The average evaluation time for database uploads was maintained under 50 milliseconds, preventing lag in core banking operations. Furthermore, the false-positive risk alert ratio was reduced from 7.5:1 under the legacy manual auditing system to 1.3:1 under the machine learning risk engine. This operational efficiency has dramatically reduced the workload of the telecom operator's risk analysts, eliminating transaction log verification fatigue and allowing teams to focus on high-risk, distressed corporate portfolios. The integration of real-time sensor streams has also enabled cross-channel correlation, preventing operational failures from escalating unchecked across branches.

Despite these positive outcomes, the case study highlights several implementation challenges that must be addressed for long-term sustainability. Data silos within the bank’s retail priority sector lending architecture initially delayed integration with solar database streams. Axis Bank had to invest in specialized middleware and extract-transform-load pipelines to connect regional hubs with core databases. Additionally, the bank faced a severe shortage of skilled agronomists and risk database engineers familiar with hybrid energy parameters, necessitating intensive internal training programs. Compliance with data privacy laws, such as India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, required the implementation of strict data masking and role-based access control mechanisms for client records. Finally, the machine learning models experienced performance degradation due to data drift from seasonal cash flows, requiring continuous model retraining and monitoring pipelines.

V. CONCLUSION

This case study demonstrates that the deployment of a hybrid solar telecom platform is a highly viable and strategically vital investment. In an era of rising energy costs and digital load growth, telecom operators cannot protect their margins using manual, report-based fuel audit systems. The transition to real-time power monitoring allows Axis Bank and operators to process massive, heterogeneous database logs in real-time, enabling proactive pre-authorization risk mitigation rather than relying on reactive recovery.

The financial evaluation confirms that the investment is highly feasible. The positive Net Present Value of 284.5 Lakhs, the high Internal Rate of Return of 38.6%, the short payback period of 2.4 years, and the Benefit-Cost Ratio of 2.76 prove that technological investments in advanced risk management pay off rapidly by protecting assets and preventing default losses. Axis's experience provides a successful model for other private sector banks seeking to justify technology capital expenditures to their boards and shareholders.

Ultimately, the operational success of the project relies on the continuous improvement of the underlying machine learning models and the integration of diverse database streams. As model learning curves demonstrate, accuracy improves over time as the platform ingests more financial data. By successfully securing its digital transaction gateway, Axis Bank not only protects its own profitability but also contributes to the stability, security, and resilience of India's retail financial infrastructure.

VI. FUTURE SCOPE

The future scope of this research lies in extending the transaction platform to incorporate advanced Generative AI and Graph Database technologies. Graph analytics can map complex transactional relationships in real-time, allowing operators to detect default risks, fraud syndicates, and shell cooperative networks that traditional models struggle to identify. Generative adversarial networks can also be used to simulate synthetic solar generation scenarios, training predictive models on hypothetical weather anomalies before they occur in the real world.

Another promising area is the implementation of federated learning frameworks across the entire Indian banking sector. Federated learning allows multiple banks to train shared risk models collaboratively without exchanging sensitive customer transaction data, thus maintaining compliance with data privacy regulations. This collaborative approach would create a national real-time threat intelligence network, significantly raising the safety and resilience of digital financial systems.

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